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SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 26 MCNS: HIGH LEVEL WORKING GROUP REPORT

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S/REL UK) SUMMARY: The November 26 meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) focused on the report of the High Level Working Group formed on October 28 by President Bush and PM Maliki to make recommendations regarding acceleration of GOI control over the security situation in Iraq (report slides e-mailed to NEA/I). While some areas were ripe for acceleration, some were not -- particularly if contracts had already been approved or insufficient resources were available. Prime Minister Maliki and Finance Minister Jabr were uncomfortable with the request for a USD 8 billion budget next year for MoD and MoI. MNF-I Commanding General Casey agreed with National Security Advisor Rubaie's suggestion to provide Maliki with a briefing on this issue, adding that he was convinced the Iraqi Security Forces required that amount. Minister of Defense Abdul Qader Jasim warned against having the Iraqi Army take on too much responsibility too fast, arguing that it was insufficiently trained to fight terrorists. Maliki dismissed his concerns. Noting their continuing militia threat, General Casey expressed concern about the proposal to accelerate the transfer to Provincial Iraqi Control of Maysan, Wasit, and Qadisiyah. Rubaie said the GOI was willing to accept some risks with regard to the transfer of these provinces. END SUMMARY.

SOME THINGS RECOMMENDED FOR ACCELERATION; SOME NOT

2. (S/REL UK) The report of the High Level Working Group charged with making recommendations on the goals of accelerating the pace of training the Iraqi Security Force, Iraqi assumption of command and control over Iraqi forces, and transferring security responsibility for security to the government of Iraq, was presented to the November 26 meeting of the MCNS. In introducing the report, National Security Advisor Rubaie said that he thought the effort that had gone into the report was something the GOI "should be proud of." Rubaie said that while some things could be accelerated, others could not be -- often for very practical reasons such as limited resources or fixed delivery dates for contracts.

PM AND JABR BALK AT PROPOSED SECURITY BUDGET FOR NEXT YEAR

3. (S/REL UK) Finance Minister Jabr said that a meeting was being organized to discuss the budgets of the MoD and MoI, adding that if either ministry needed something urgently he would be happy to authorize it. He said that MNSTC-I Commanding General Dempsey was pushing him to support the MOI/Mod budget request of approximately USD 8 billion for the next fiscal year. PM Maliki expressed concern about this

amount, arguing that some of that money would need to be invested in other parts of the GOI's budget. Rubaie offered to brief Maliki on the details of the MoD/MoI budget requests, a suggestion that MNF-I Commanding General Casey endorsed. Casey also said that MNF-I had looked into the issue several times and was convinced that the Iraqi Security Forces would require USD 8 billion next year. Jabr said he would look into the issue.

¶4. (S/REL UK) Minister of Defense Abdul Qader Jasim raised MoD's life support needs, adding that he had talked to Jabr about this. Jabr complained that USD 100 million had been spent on field kitchens which he thought were probably not worth USD 20 million. Maliki said this explained why the contractors had gotten so rich.

MOD WARNS AGAINST ACCELERATING TOO FAST; MALIKI NOT CONVINCED

¶5. (S/REL UK) While Abdul Qader discussed ways in which transfer of operational control of the Iraqi Army (IA) was being accelerated, he also argued that in at least some areas slowing down might make sense. He said that the previous army had been trained for traditional wars and that leaders were not adequately prepared to fight terrorists. He said that this was nothing to be ashamed of, but that time would be required to develop the proper skills. Maliki rejected this argument, stating that all that was required was for the IA to maintain public order and go after some "gangsters."

CG UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PIC ACCELERATION FOR 3 PROVINCES

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¶6. (S/REL UK) Rubaie said that a decision had been made to accelerate the transfer to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) of the three Kurdish provinces (Erbil, Dahuk, and Sulaymaniyah) by "delinking" the issue from that of Peshmerga transformation. Additionally, the group had agreed to try to accelerate the transfer of Maysan, Qadisiyah, and Wasit. General Casey said that he was not entirely comfortable with the acceleration of these last three provinces, noting the continuing militia problem in them. He said that they would need to take a hard look at the standards for PIC and make a determination as to whether acceleration of these provinces was justified. Rubaie noted that the GOI was willing to accept some risks with the transfer of these provinces.
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